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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet outlines the role of Wisconsin's assistant principals as it relates to students, the administrative team, staff, curriculum, and the community. It also presents a brief job description developed for the assistant principal in a senior high school of 1,100 students that has only one assistant administrator. (Author/IRT)

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THE ROLE OF THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

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FORWARD

The Assistant Principal Commission of the Wisconsin Secondary School Administrators Association is pleased to present this document on the role of the assistant principal in the secondary schools of Wisconsin. Although not intended to be definitive in nature, the concepts outlined in this brochure represent a consensus on the role as expressed by such practitioners in Wisconsin's secondary schools, regardless of the title they hold.

In addition, a sample job description, consistent with this document, is included as an appendix. Hopefully, these two segments will prove to be helpful to school districts across our state and nation who wish to update and upgrade their position descriptions, but especially we hope to assist practitioners without job descriptions at all and those who contemplate employment in this area of secondary education.

We thank the many administrators in Wisconsin who contributed to the development of this pamphlet. Special recognition goes to those persons who served on the original Assistant Principal Committee of WSSAA chaired by Gerald Stern of Brookfield East High School and to the members of the current Assistant Principal Commission Advisory Committee chaired by Frank Borg of Merrill High School.

Donald C. Larsen
WSSAA Assistant Executive Secretary

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Position Paper: The Role of the Assistant Principal

During the past decade when school enrollments have increased, educational programs have similarly increased, and a complex education system has resulted. The number of assistant principalships has correspondingly risen in order to fill the need for individuals to perform the myriad of administrative tasks dictated by this large and complex system.

It has become evident that the most basic and pervasive problem relating to the assistant principalship is the lack of a precise and defensible definition of the position. To solve this problem, a definition should be written which would describe tasks commensurate with the professional qualifications and preparation of the incumbents, provide opportunities for the exercise of professional judgment, and provide appropriate training for a principalship.

Historically, there has been a scarcity of literature on the assistant principalship. This may be due in part to the fact that the position has been assumed to be basically similar to the principalship. The limited amount of research and literature on the assistant principal

may also be due to the fact that the position is relatively new to school administration. Originally, the assistant was perceived to be a person who would relieve the principal of clerical and managerial duties. The title "Assistant Principal" is generic rather than descriptive. As a position, it may encompass all or any segment of the principals', deans', counselors', teachers' or clerks' responsibilities or various combinations of these. The title "Assistant Principal" may refer to a broad range of responsibilities within a school. Clarification of the role is a prerequisite to providing an appropriate job description for the assistant principal.

While many assistant principals' primary duties in fact are to act as a clerk of attendance and a disciplinarian, and the need for these functions certainly exists, there is also a need for a person with all the human interaction skills, organizational skills, and communicative skills to realistically and effectively deal with and implement innovative educational ideas and objectives. The assistant principal should have the opportunity as well as the obligation to use his or her professional skills in all of these areas to deal with the everyday real life problems that exist in today's schools, not to mention creativity or innovation.

In this position paper on the assistant principalship, the major areas of professional responsibility which have been identified are:

1. Students
2. Administrative Team
3. Staff
4. Curriculum
5. Community

Part One - Students

The first priority responsibility of an assistant principal is the students in the school. The assistant principal's relationship with students must be one of mutual respect. The assistant principal stands not only as the authority figure, but also as the protector of student rights and individual freedoms.

The assistant principal of today should be an individual who possesses the ability to communicate with today's young people. Flexibility to meet each situation on an individual and positive basis and to build rapport based on respect is important.

The assistant principal should seek ways to involve students in the process of establishing student rules and regulations.

Another important ability for the assistant principal, or for that matter for any administrator, to possess is the ability to listen and to help guide individuals with decisions that will not only benefit them while in school but after graduation as well.

The assistant principal should act as liaison between teachers and students and possess the ability to perceive problems and to suggest potential remedies that are sincere attempts to satisfy both parties.

Part Two - The Administrative Team

The assistant principal's position should be that of a full-fledged member of the administrative team, partners with such positions as principal, curriculum coordinator, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. The assistant principal's attitude and loyalty must reflect his or her cognizance of the fact that he or she is a member of the administrative team.

The assistant principal must be prepared to assume responsibilities that are delegated to him or her by the principal. The principal in turn, should allow the assistant principal the opportunity to fulfill these responsibilities and to become an effective innovator and initiator within the total school program.

When the principal and assistant principal operate cohesively as a team, utilizing their individual talents, schools will be prepared to meet the challenges that face them more effectively.

Part Three - Staff

The assistant principal may be involved in the recruitment and hiring of certified teachers as well as non-certified personnel. The involvement may range from acting as a building tour guide to involvement in carefully planned conferences designed to formulate recommendations to be shared with other administrative team members.

Staff supervision and evaluation may be a shared administrative responsibility. The assistant principal may utilize his or her interaction with students and share the feedback with the teaching staff. Information sharing coupled with visitation and other evaluative techniques should effect positive change in the classroom.

The assistant principal works for the staff. He or she should let the staff know that the position is active and facilitative. The assistant principal should constantly search for ways to diagnose potential staff problems and is in an ideal position to actively improve and enhance staff morale.

The assistant principal must develop community relations skills. He or she must be able to aid the staff in a supportive role and to enlist staff expertise for worthwhile community services.

Part Four - Curriculum

The assistant principal must be involved in educational planning in the school. The assistant principal's expertise is an effective tool in planning a curriculum relevant to students' needs, and because of this he or she usually is involved with or responsible for the scheduling process. The assistant principal's voice can be very effective in formulating and arriving at educational decisions that are realistic. The assistant principal's everyday experience in dealing with students adds an effective complement to planning the total curriculum. The assistant principal's educational background and training enables him or her to

suggest and initiate innovative programs to meet the needs of the students.

The assistant principal is an invaluable cog in the wheel of curriculum change. He or she is able to give direction and impetus to motivate teachers to develop new programs. The need for broadly based input in curriculum development requires the professional involvement of the assistant principal.

Part Five - Community

The role of an assistant principal within the school community is one of involvement. This involvement includes public relations within the school in which he or she serves as well as involvement with various service clubs and organizations which serve the community.

Through personal involvement in these clubs and organizations, the assistant principal may better serve in the capacity of communicator of his or her school's curriculum and programs.

The assistant principal should also become involved in the many services that the community offers its citizens, students and parents. These include counseling centers, drug councils, employment agencies, social services and welfare agencies and the law enforcement authorities. The assistant principal is often involved with students and parents in these areas. The assistant principal should also possess the ability and knowledge to work with these agencies to more effectively help the students of the school.

APPENDIX

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL JOB DESCRIPTION SAMPLE*

Mission Statement

The Assistant Principal shall work directly under the supervision of the Principal. He shall assist and relieve the principal of such duties that prevent him from fulfilling his primary responsibility of promoting the educational well being of each student in the school. He shall also establish and supervise a management system for the performance of the school administrative operations.

Position Goals

- To serve as principal in the absence of the principal.
- To assist the principal in the overall administration of the school.
- To supervise the student activities in the building, including student accounting, discipline, and extracurricular activities.

Performance Responsibilities (Objectives)

1. To assist the principal with the supervision and evaluation of instructional staff, non-certified employees, and the instructional program.
2. To assist the principal in the supervision and recommendation of needed facility and maintenance requirements at the school.
3. To implement and supervise student attendance accounting procedures, and work with other personnel for investigative follow-up actions.
4. Direct and supervise student activities.
5. Discipline, supervise, and control students within the school and oversee all disciplinary procedures keeping record of same.
6. To assist the principal, department chairmen, with the preparation and administration of the budget.
7. To supervise the health and safety of students within the building and campus area.
8. To assist the principal in the scheduling of teachers, students, and facilities.
9. To supervise and administer the grading system in cooperation with guidance personnel.
10. To perform other duties that are self-initiated or that may be assigned by the principal.

* This is an actual job description for an assistant principal in a senior high school of 1,100 students which has only one assistant administrator (1974-75). Specific job descriptions vary a great deal from school to school because of many factors. The one presented here is but one sample and it is quite general with reference to areas of responsibility. WSSAA has many other samples on file from various-sized schools and schools with more than one assistant. If you are interested in receiving other samples, please contact the WSSAA office.

Prepared by

The Assistant Principal Commission

of

Wisconsin Secondary School Administrators Association